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*The Exposition of Sundry Difficult Passages of  
Scripture.*

BY THE

REV. C. C. STEWART, M.A.,

*Author of "The Scriptural Form of Church Government."*

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Toronto :

JAMES CAMPBELL & SON,

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## PART I.

The Parabl of the Labourers in the  
Vineyard.

When did Paul wish himself accursed  
from Christ?

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## PREFACE.

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There are many passages in the Scriptures which cannot be treated at sufficient length in ordinary commentaries to give one in search of the truth much satisfaction. The author has thought that, when so many men labour in the production of commentaries, useful though they be, it would be well if more would turn their attention to special difficulties, give them a more earnest and patient study, and treat them at greater length than one can reasonably be expected to do, who sets himself to work to produce an exposition of the whole or even of part of the Bible. The author here makes a small contribution of the nature just indicated, and it is his intention, if these discourses should prove useful to any, and the Lord so wills it, to publish others of a similar nature, from time to time, as he may be able.

He has ventured to differ from men of great name and fame in Scripture knowledge, and if any are ready to accuse him of presumption, his reply is, that there is no work, not even the Bible itself, which should be used to fetter the human mind ; but the great object of all works calculated to have a beneficial effect upon it, is to stimulate it to activity in reference to the things of which they treat, and the more perfect they are, the more certain it is that every mind so exercised by them, will eventually come into harmony with them. There is no mistake more pernicious in itself, or more derogatory to the character of the documents put forward, than the one of supposing that such documents carry with them the power to stretch all human minds on their rack, and at once conform them to their measure ; for that authority they can never have, and the claiming of it for them implies the suspicion that they cannot stand the true test ; while the gaining of it for them carries with it the spiritual and intellectual slavery of all who bow down before them.

God never brings His book to human souls with any such condition ; but He says : ' read, consider, test, prove, and hold fast that which is good,' and we are certain that the great and good men already referred to, would be sorry indeed, that any should claim for them one grain of



such authority, and that to such as would be disposed to yield submission to anything which they have said without an intelligent conviction of its truth, they would be ready to cry, in the words of an Apostle, "Stand up ; I myself also am a man."

He must say, however, that he yields to none in his appreciation of the great works which they have accomplished, and while he has differed from them, he has endeavoured to treat their opinions with all that candour and fairness which he asks from others when criticising his own.

C. C. S.

Owen Sound, March, 1873.

## The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.

MATT. XX. 1, 16.

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In undertaking a journey where many experienced travellers have found great difficulties, by reason of the nature of the way, it well becomes us, not only to avail ourselves of their discoveries, but also to consider well their mistakes:—we ought not only to search for every guide post on the true way, but also for every indication of false ways, that we may be able to keep the right and avoid the wrong. Even so, when undertaking the interpretation of a very difficult passage of Scripture, we should hold fast by that which is sure and certain, while we reject altogether what is known to be false, and examine with great care what is, as yet, untried.

While looking into different interpretations of this parable, and taking note of the difficulties—not to say contradictions—which even the commentators themselves seem to have felt, we have come to the conclusion that these difficulties have arisen from making certain assumptions on the one side, while certain great and well defined truths were neglected on the other.

To say that the vineyard mentioned in the parable is the Church, is an assumption, since it has nowhere in Scripture been decided that the vineyard shall always represent the Church in every figure of speech in which it is used, and there is nothing in the parable itself, in our opinion, which requires it to be so interpreted. Lange thinks that “it is unnecessary to prove that the vineyard is intended to designate the kingdom of heaven. (See Is. v. 1.; Matt. xxi. 28, 33.)” It is a great pity that he did not try to prove it, for he might, in trying, have found his mistake. The fact that the vineyard is used in other passages to represent the kingdom, is no proof at all that it does so here. It is only a principle of common sense, that when anything is used as an illustration, what it signifies, is to be determined by its immediate connections, and not by what it sets forth in other and totally different connections. The absurdity of Lange’s statement may be easily seen, by just reading: ‘The *vineyard* is like unto a certain householder who went out to hire labourers into the vineyard, or, the king-

dom of heaven is like the Master going forth to introduce labourers into the kingdom of heaven.'

It is an assumption to affirm that all the labourers in the vineyard are either true or professed Christians ; and of the same nature is the supposition that every one who is dealt with by the ruler of the kingdom in accordance with its laws is necessarily a member of the Church. The proof of the last two statements we shall bring forward in due time.

To avoid all mistakes here, it is necessary for us at the very outset to ascertain what is meant by the phrase, *kingdom of heaven*. This should not be a very difficult task, inasmuch as it is so often spoken of in the Scriptures, and spoken of, too, in so many different connections. It is compared to a great many things, and to things which are widely different from each other. It is said to be like unto ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom, &c. ; to a householder who went forth to hire labourers into his vineyard, &c. ; "to a certain king which would take account of his servants," &c. ; "to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal," &c. ; "to a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field," &c. ; "to a man which sowed good seed in his field," &c., and to many other things. It is spoken of as existing in three different places. 1. In the heart: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, lo here ! or, lo there ! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." \* "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." † 2. In this world: "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom" (i.e., the kingdom of heaven) "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," &c. ‡ The kingdom here spoken of must exist in this world, or there would not be found in it "things that offend, and them which do iniquity." 3. In heaven: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." § Now, what can be meant by the *kingdom of heaven* ?

Let us think, for a moment, of what the word *kingdom* signifies, for when the Spirit makes use of any such word in order to set forth heavenly things, it is because it already represents for us earthly things

\* Luke xvii., 20.

† Rom. xiv., 17.

‡ Matt. xiii., 41.

§ Luke xiii., 28.



analogous to those which it is His design to bring before us. A kingdom implies a ruler, subjects, and national possessions. These again imply the existence of laws, the instruction of men in the principles of these laws, the administration of these laws, and the means and appliances for having them both taught and administered, the behaviour of those who live under them, and to whom they are taught, and their reward according to their behaviour, and so on. The kingdom of heaven, or of God, is just that great organization of which Christ is the supreme ruler, and of which men and angels are the subjects. We have the laws of this kingdom, in as far as men are concerned, in the Gospel or the Bible, for the whole Bible contains the Gospel story. We have these laws taught and administered by the Church under Christ in this world, and at the end He will judge the world by the principles revealed in this great Gospel story.

We can now easily see how this kingdom can be spoken of as existing in three different places. Our world has revolted from its ruler, hence in order to have His kingdom established in this world as one containing loyal subjects—we say containing loyal subjects, for there is a sense in which His kingdom is over all—it is necessary that men be brought back to acknowledge their allegiance to Him; and this is done by the King's getting possession of men's hearts or affections. He brings a heart into subjection to Him, that heart gives Him its love, it bows down to Him, receives His laws as its guide, and enthrones Him king. Thus we have at once His kingdom in the heart. We have only to imagine a number of such hearts—a number of human beings who have thus submitted to Christ, organized as a body to do His work, and under authority to Him, (as of course they must be, for the perfection of a ruler's power over a nation consists in the fact that he has control of the hearts composing that nation by reason of their willing submission to his laws and principles of government,) and we have another phase of His kingdom, viz., the Church. We have only to carry the notion a little farther, and think of those whom he has in heaven, whose hearts are bound to Him for the same reasons that His followers still on earth acknowledge Him as king, and we have His kingdom in heaven.

In reference to the fact that this kingdom is compared to a great many things which are widely different from each other, we have to bear this in mind, that when it is likened to any particular thing we are not to expect that in the thing to which it is likened we will find a

perfect representation of everything in it; on the contrary, it is only some particular feature or features of it that are set forth by such illustrations. When it is compared to leaven, for example, we are to understand that its laws and principles of action, *i.e.*, the doctrines of the Gospel, operate in the heart and in society as leaven does in the meal; the leaven brings the whole of the meal under its influence, and so these doctrines subdue the whole heart, and as soon as one heart is under their influence, it is sure to communicate them to another, and so the work has gone on, and will go on until the whole world is evangelized. In the parable of the pearl of great price is set forth *the precious nature of the blessing* which one becomes possessed of when he is made a loyal subject of this kingdom. The merchant is looking for pearls in order that he may purchase them, just as all men are seeking for joy and peace; he at length discovers one pearl of great price, just as the weary, anxious and heavy laden sinner, when his eyes are opened, finds the fountain of life; and as the merchant is willing to part with all his wealth if it will purchase the pearl, so the sinner, who has discovered the great blessing of salvation, is willing to part with everything else, if need be, that he may possess it. In the parable of the treasure hid in the field the same truth is set forth, with this additional one, the merchant is willing to part with all that he may get the pearl, the man who finds the treasure is willing not only to part with all else to get it, but to take whatever else its possession may entail upon him; the Christian not only parts with all for Christ, but welcomes shame and suffering, if necessary, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world. The parable of the ten virgins again sets forth other features of this kingdom. It sets forth the great need there is of being prepared, according to the principles of the kingdom, to meet the King when He comes to receive His own to the mansions which He has prepared for them, by reason of the difficulties which the unprepared shall then find in their way, and especially on account of the stern laws according to which they shall be judged. And so we might go on to almost any length showing how different features of this great kingdom are set forth in the different things to which it is compared.

We may expect, then, that some great feature or features of the kingdom of heaven will be set forth in this parable of the labourers in the vineyard, and our inquiry now is, what are they? To ascertain we

must just take the same course which we ought to follow in the interpretation of any other passage of Scripture. This course we shall now point out.

We have as safe-guides, first, the general tenor of Scripture. This must never be lost sight of at any time, but particularly in the interpretation of the parables do we need it. I do not say it is the general tenor of Scripture which gives to each parable its peculiar form or particular phase of truth; but this, that it is only in the light of Scripture teaching in general that we can see the features of the truth taught in the parable coming out in distinct outline. We have, secondly, the context, and it affords us two very important and distinct elements:—the first is Peter's question and the answer to it, and the second is this statement, "So the last shall be first and the first last, for many be called, but few chosen."

Peter says "Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus replies to all the apostles, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

On the first part of this answer, Barnes says, "Among them" (the redeemed) "Jesus says, His apostles shall be honoured in the Day of Judgment, as earthly kings place in posts of honour the counsellors and judges of those who have signally served them." Whatever may be the exact meaning of the passage, there can be no doubt of this, that it is some great honour which is to be bestowed on the apostles, over and above what is given to others. The remaining part of the passage shows that reward is proportioned to self-denial, for whatever is given up shall be restored, though not in kind, yet in value, one hundred fold.

This seems to be in accordance both with reason and Scripture. It is reasonable; for if we take that view of heaven to which, in our present state, we seem to be shut up, viz., this, that while it does not yet appear what we shall be, we know that whatever our capacities may be, they will be satisfied to the fullest extent, it will appear that there will be different degrees of reward, for we believe, and are sure, that all capacities will not be equal; therefore happiness or rewards cannot be equal to all.

It is also scriptural: he who used his pound so well that he gained ten, received authority over ten cities; while he who gained only five got authority over five cities.\* Dr. David Brown says, "Ten . . . five cities—different degrees of future gracious reward, proportioned to the measure of present fidelity." In Daniel it is said: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."† This seems to point to a difference in future rewards. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we are told of Christ the only foundation; also of those who build upon this foundation, and of the day which shall try the work, and it is added, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."‡ Comment is unnecessary: the reward of the one whose work abides, and of the one whose work perishes, must be different. We might refer to other passages, but our space will not allow of it. It seems to us that both the context and the general tenor of Scripture teaching make it impossible for us to accept that interpretation of this parable, which goes to show that the rewards of God's servants will at the last be equal.

In the context we have still this passage to consider: "But many that are first shall be last, and the last first. For the kingdom of heaven," &c. \* \* \* \* "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." The first part is, if taken alone, enigmatical; it cannot be understood except in connection with a plainer and more explicit statement. This is furnished: the words, "many be called, but few chosen," are given as a reason for many of the first being last, and the last being first. Who are the chosen? It will not do to dispose of this matter in the summary way in which Barnes does. The chosen here are the *ἐκλεκτοί* the elect, the same who are spoken of in the Revelation as the called, elect (chosen), and faithful,§ who go forth to war in company with the Lamb; the same who cry day and night unto God, and whom He declares He will speedily avenge;|| and the same who are mentioned in these words, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"¶ The very same sentence is used in connection with the parable of the great supper, and there, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that it teaches the doctrine of election. Many had been invited to the

\* Luke xix, 16.

† Dan. xii, 3.

‡ 1 Cor. iii, 14-15.

§ Rev. xvii, 14.

|| Luke xviii, 7.

¶ Rom. viii, 33.

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marriage feast; the invitation had been treated with contempt; the servants had been murdered by some of those whom they had invited; the murderers had been destroyed; and then other servants were sent to the highways to gather together all they could find in order to furnish the wedding with guests. The guests were provided, but one was found without a wedding garment; he was bound hand and foot and cast out into outer darkness; and after all this the announcement was made, covering the whole ground of the parable, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" and this is given as a reason why some sat down as welcome guests at the marriage feast, while so many never had the privilege. This is, without dispute, the doctrine of election.

Now all these references go to show that the words at the conclusion of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard teach the same doctrine. So think Alford, Brown, and others of greater or less note as exegetical scholars. Every attempt to evade this doctrine here seems to us a complete failure.

But what of the first being last, and the last first? These words, we have already said, must be understood in the light of what follows them, in fact they must be so understood, or we must give them up altogether. They need an explanation, and what follows is the only one given, unless we call a passage in Luke, to which we shall refer, an exception. The first become last, because the last have been chosen in their stead, and so become the first. The Jews, called first, now became last, because they rejected Christ, and many of the Gentiles, the last called, became first, because they were chosen. Those who made light of the invitation to the marriage feast became last, though they were first invited, while those invited at the last became first, and that, too, because they were chosen. Esau was the first born, but "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger." The words do not refer at all, as some suppose, to the first Christians receiving their reward after those who have been more recently brought to Christ, for all Christians will receive their reward at the same time on the Day of Judgment; the words, "Come ye blessed of my Father," will be addressed to all at once. And if we take it that they are in a measure rewarded before that day, as doubtless they are, then the first are first, and the last last.

The words are given by Luke in a slightly different connection,



and it gives a decided support to the interpretation which we have given. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then ye shall begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold *there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*" \* What can be the force of these concluding words except this, that the first who become last are those who, though they have great privileges, shall come short of eternal happiness, while some who, though they are less highly favoured, shall attain to it? We may, therefore, reasonably expect the doctrine of election to be set forth in this parable as the ground or reason why some who were first called became last, in that they did not obtain the blessing; while others who were called last obtained it, and so became first.

We have just to draw attention to one more circumstance before we proceed to the interpretation of the parable. It is this: We know that the doctrine contained in the parable cannot be a contradiction of the direct answer given to Peter; but, nevertheless, being suggested by what he had just said, we may naturally expect it to be a still further answer to that question, and one in every way appropriate to his case.

We are now prepared to take up the parable. It appears to us that two great principles are set forth in it:—the principle of justice and the principle of grace. The first is most appropriately illustrated by the case of the labourers who were engaged in the morning. The householder needs labourers, and he goes forth to find them; the labourers want work and they seek it; the two parties meet, and an agreement is made; for a definite amount promised by the one, the others agree to do a day's work. When evening comes, the labourers can, as a matter of justice, claim their hire, and the householder is bound in common honesty

\* Luke xiii., 24-30.

to pay them. Some of the commentators seem to be a little hazy just here. Alford, e.g., says: "The gift is, and will be, to each man as he is prepared to receive it. To the envious and murmurers it will be as the fruit which turned to ashes in the mouth; by their own unchristian spirit they will 'lose the things that they have wrought' (2 John, 8), and their reward will be null. This is not what the parable says. The reward is not null, it is a veritable reward. The householder insists upon paying it, because he is just. The labourers can in justice claim their pay; the householder, because he is just, says, 'Take that is thine.' And when he pays, and the labourers receive their hire, justice is neither more nor less than satisfied; and the labourers and he part, the one as much indebted to his neighbour as the other, since neither is indebted. This is simple justice as recognized by the law of God, and by every right-thinking man.

The principle of grace is exemplified by the case of those who were hired later in the day. The householder not only gives them what they earned, but out of his own goodness he makes them a present, because he can do as he pleases with his own.

The two classes of labourers represent the two great classes of the judgment day, the one called indeed in the world, but not chosen to salvation, and so appear on that day to be dealt with by a perfectly just God according to their works; the other called and chosen to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, appear to receive a reward which they have never earned, but one which is a gift of God's free grace.

Besides these there is another great doctrine taught in the parable, and one, too, which is the foundation upon which the others rest, viz., the sovereignty of God: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" God is sovereign in His dispensation of the gifts of His love and grace. All who have received salvation, or ever shall receive it, 'have been chosen in Christ to it before the foundation of the world, not because God foresaw that they would forsake sin and live holy lives, but that they might do so—that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.'\* And when, at the close of the great day, it shall appear that all the saved received salvation as a free gift, every mouth will be stopped

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\* Eph 1, 4, 5.

by this consideration : The blessing was God's, and God's alone ; no one had any claim upon it, and in doing what He pleased with His own, He was doing that which was lawful.

Moreover, in the exercise of His sovereign power, He passes by or withholds His salvation from whom he pleases : "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." \* But while He passes certain by, He does not deal with them in an arbitrary and capricious manner. His sovereignty is the sovereignty of wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, as well as of power. He reveals to all the very laws by which they shall be judged, and these laws, our own conscience must acknowledge, are perfectly just and fair, for when the wicked are at the last rewarded according to their works in the light of these laws, none shall receive more than he deserves, or more than his own conscience shall recognize as just. †

The remaining parts of the parable are of secondary importance, and take the places which naturally belong to them by reason of their connection with the great truths just brought out ; while in this, as in every parable, there are certain things, such as the particular hours mentioned, the market place, the calling of the man who found fault "*friend*," &c., which are the mere *setting*, so to speak, of the more important parts, and do not in themselves stand for anything.

The interpretation just given, we think, is in perfect harmony with the context, and with the teaching of the Scriptures in general.

1. It is appropriate to what seems to have been Peter's state of mind, while the common interpretation is not. Peter speaks as though some merit attached to their forsaking all and following Christ. He is told that the apostles shall have a great reward ; but told at the same time that it was God's grace which made them forsake all, and that the very thing for which he seems to think a reward is due is itself a great favour from God. How well calculated is this to prevent boasting, and to keep the apostles humble. But, according to the common interpretation, the parable is not at all appropriate ; when the apostles are told that they shall have such great things : what necessity is there for warning them as Dr. Brown says they are warned : "Take heed, lest by indulging the spirit of these 'murmurers' at the 'penny' given to the last hired, ye miss your own penny, though first in the vineyard." This does not at

\* Rom. ix, 18.

† See Hodge, Theol. Lon. and Edin. ed., p. 28.

all apply to what seems to have been Peter's state of mind when he spoke, nor yet to what is likely was his state of mind when the announcement of his reward was made to him. He would not be likely to murmur when he heard that he was to occupy one of the twelve thrones; but both this announcement, and what he himself was boasting of, viz., his forsaking all to follow Christ, would have a tendency to make him proud; hence the other interpretation is most appropriate. Nothing tends so thoroughly to exclude boasting and cultivate humility as the doctrine of election. The most advanced Christian must say: 'By the grace of God I am what I am, and it ill-becomes me to suppose that God is indebted to me because I have forsaken all and followed Him!'

2. It is just what we would expect the parable to teach, when we consider that it stands connected with the words, "So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many be called, but few chosen," as an illustration stands connected with the doctrine illustrated. The common interpretation is altogether at fault here. Taking Dr. David Brown again as a representative; he says: "Many receive the invitations of the gospel whom God has never 'chosen to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.' But what, it may be asked, has this to do with the subject of our parable? Probably this—to teach us that men who have wrought in Christ's service all their days, may, by the spirit which they manifest at the last, make it too evident that, as between God and their own souls, they never were chosen workmen at all." This invalidates all the first part of his interpretation, in which he makes the labourers hired in the morning, and who are here rejected as those who were not chosen, represent the apostles.

3. It agrees with the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject, which represents Christians as saved by God's grace alone, while all others are dealt with on the principles of justice. The common interpretation contradicts Scripture by making all rewards at the last equal.

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#### OBJECTIONS.

1. 'The vineyard represents the Church, and so you have made the Church include the whole world, both bad and good.' There is no proof whatever that the vineyard represents the Church; to be sure it might, under other circumstances, very appropriately represent it, but that is no reason why a teacher may not, by it, illustrate other things. What such

an illustration sets forth is known, not from the thing itself, but from its connections; e.g., sleep sometimes signifies natural death, sometimes spiritual death, and sometimes spiritual slothfulness, but it would be a great mistake to make it represent any of these in the parable of the ten virgins. A vineyard is nothing more in itself than a farm, or an orchard, or a railway, and if it had been said that a householder went out to hire labourers to work in his orchard or on a railway, would we suppose that either of these must necessarily represent the Church?

2. "It is said that the kingdom of heaven is like," &c. According to your interpretation, do you not suppose the kingdom of heaven to be composed of all men? Not at all. To belong to the kingdom of heaven as a loyal subject is one thing; to be dealt with by the Ruler of that kingdom according to its laws is another thing. All, both bad and good, must meet that Ruler and be dealt with according to its laws, but only part are its true subjects. This appears from many of the parables which relate to the kingdom of heaven. Some of the wayside hearers were never subjects of the kingdom of heaven, no, not even by profession, yet its teachings reached them, and they must account for what they have heard; the field in which the tares grow along with the wheat is the *world*; and the foolish virgins represent all whose light fails, whether it be the light of a false profession or a worldly philosophy.

3. 'You have said that the labourers who work all day represent those who are dealt with on the principles of justice, *i. e.*, unsaved sinners, and the others the saved; how is it, then, that these sinners speak of the saved as being made equal with them? This is an objection of apparent force; but it holds against the interpretation of Alford and Brown as well as against ours. I may, to this, make counter objections. Suppose all the labourers are Christians, how is it that the householder says, 'Take that thine is?' Can Christians be said to have anything that is their own? is not their reward entirely of grace? We have before seen that this penny in justice belongs to these labourers, and in justice they can demand it; the householder says so, too; in his estimation it rightly belongs to them; can Christians, as a matter of right or justice, claim anything? The householder says to them, "Go thy way;" does the Lord so address His followers? does he say to them, "Depart," or "Come, ye blessed?" These labourers "murmured against the householder;" do Christians murmur against the Saviour? The householder says, "Is thine eye evil?" implying that it is; will any Christian, at the



great day of account, have an evil eye? will they not be like Christ when they see Him as He is, and because He is good, be good also.

The objection arises from twisting expressions in the parable into harmony with preconceived notions, as well as from not looking beneath the surface to ascertain what the true ground of complaint is. It is not the surface fact, viz., that each receives a penny, which troubles the first labourers; they are angry because the last get a present, and they get none; they are angry because the householder gives what is his own to others, not to them. This fact appears from the answer which the householder gives in justification of his conduct, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" they are evidently offended at what appears to be his partiality. This is just the complaint which sinners make against the doctrine of election now, and will be one of the complaints forever silenced, when the proceedings of the Day of Judgment vindicate the character of the great Householder as a God of justice and mercy.

4. 'But as both receive a penny, does not this bring justice and grace to the same thing?' This is just the last objection stated in different words. It is made on the supposition that all the labourers are Christians, and of course it must follow that the lessons taught are these: All Christians will receive an equal reward at the last, some will murmur, and the Lord will tell them that they have an evil eye, and will ask them to take what in justice is their due, and go away. Now this is contrary to the context, and also to Scripture in general. The penny must, then, be introduced in the parable for some other purpose. We think it has been introduced to set forth the great principles of justice and grace, and he who would show that we are wrong must tell us of some better reason why it has been used. Of course, if all that holds true of pennies is to be pressed against our interpretation, we will have no end of objections, but at the same time such a course would make not only the interpretation of this, but of every other parable impossible. We might, on the same principle, say that because five virgins were wise and five foolish, that the good and bad will at the end be exactly equal; that only virgins will be saved or lost; that the oil which the bad have in this world is just the same as that which the good have, the bad err in not having a greater quantity; that Christ will come to judgment in the night; that His people are not His bride, since they are only called to the marriage feast, and so on.

5. 'These labourers are all introduced to the vineyard by the house-

holder, and work in his service ;' does God introduce sinners into His vineyard, and do they work in His service, and does he punish them when they have finished their work? Yes; "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."\* God introduces into His great vineyard, the world, every son of Adam. The householder sent the labourers to work in his vineyard, but nothing is said of their motives; they may have been the most sordid—it afterwards appears by their murmuring that they were; so sinners serve God, even though their hearts are far from Him. He declares that the Assyrian monarch is the rod of His anger, and that he will send this monarch against an hypocritical nation, viz., the Jews; and that, too, though the Assyrian has no intention of serving Him. And besides all this He adds, "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *I will punish* the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." He will do this because of the boasting of the Assyrian, for says He, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?" &c.† God makes the wrath of man to praise Him.‡ So we see that though sinners are the slaves of the Devil, both they and the Devil together cannot defeat God's purposes, but only succeed in accomplishing as in the case of the death of Christ, "whatsoever His band and His counsel determined before to be done."§ For this work he punishes them, for "He speaks unto them in His wrath, and vexes them in His sore displeasure." ||

We have now finished our work for the present on this great parable; and if the interpretation which we have given puts a very natural and not a forced construction on the imagery of the parable; if it is thoroughly consistent with itself; if it is in perfect harmony with the context and the general tenor of Scripture; if no reasonable objection can be urged against it; and if no other interpretation can be given which will stand such tests, then it must be the correct one. We think it will stand all the above tests, but we may be mistaken; we therefore send it forth that others may test it, and in doing so, whether they find us to be right or in error in this matter, we are sure that their knowledge will be increased.

\* Ps. xxiv., 1.

† Isaiah x., 5-15.

‡ Ps. lxxvi., 10.

§ Acts iv., 28.

|| Ps. ii. 5.—Compare these passages.

### Did Paul wish himself Accursed from Christ?

Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυρούσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστιν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὁδὴν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου. ἡχόμην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου, τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα, κ.τ.λ.—Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.

Great is the difficulty attending the interpretation of this passage. How could Paul, a most sincere and eminent Christian, as well as an apostle specially favoured of the Lord, say that he could wish himself accursed from Christ? Some, to avoid this difficulty of a theological nature, have proposed to render the passage, *I did wish to be accursed*, and objections, both theological and grammatical, have been urged against it. Hodge says: 1. "The usual force of the imperfect indicative would give a meaning to what Paul says, which he would rather have expressed by the usual tense of narration, viz., the aorist;" e.g. if he had wished to say, "I did wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren," the following would have been the expression *ἡξάμην ποτὶ*, not *ἡχόμην*. . . 3. "This interpretation does not give a sense pertinent to the apostle's object. He is not expressing what was the state of his mind formerly, but what it was when writing. It was no proof of love to his brethren, that he once felt as they then did; but the highest imaginable, if the ordinary interpretation be adopted. 4. The language will hardly admit of this interpretation. No Jew would express his hatred of Christ, and his indifference to the favours which he offered, by saying he wished himself accursed from Christ. Paul never so wished himself before his conversion, for this supposes that he recognised the power of Christ to inflict on him the imprecated curse."

While stating his objections to the interpretation of the imperfect in its historical sense, he shows his preference for the common interpretation of the passage. He says, "It is no objection to the common translation, that some form of the optative is not used instead of the imperfect indicative, and that, too, without an optative particle; the 25th of Acts, 22nd verse, makes a like use of the imperfect."

Alford, like Hodge, one of the ripest scholars and ablest commentators of modern times, takes the same view, "The imperfect," says he, "is not historical alluding to his days of Pharisaism as Pelag. and others, but quasi-optative as in reff. (Acts xxvii. 29, reff. imperf.,—Acts xxv. 22, reff.) I was wishing, had it been possible,—*ἤχόμην εἰ ἐνεχώρει, εἰ ἐνεδέχετο*.—Phot. The sense of the imperf. in such expressions is the proper and strict one (and no new discovery, but common enough in every school-boy's reading); the act is unfinished, an obstacle intervening. So in Latin, "*faciebam, ni.....*" the completed sentence being '*faciebam et perfecissem, ni .....*' "

Winer, Jelf, and others, also show us by references both to the N.T. and the classic authors, that *I could wish* is a correct rendering of the imperfect in certain cases, and we are not the least disposed to dispute it; we may just remark, however, that we would naturally have expected *ἐβουλόμην* here instead of *ἤχόμην*, if Paul had really meant to say "I could wish."

After all this we are afraid that we may seem to be perverse when we say that we cannot accept this rendering; we cannot accept it, because it makes for us theological difficulties of such a nature that we cannot be reconciled to them by mere grammatical accuracy, even if the rendering possessed such accuracy, which it does not. These theological difficulties we now proceed to point out.

It is our duty, in the first place, to find out the exact force of this quasi-optative interpretation. It will not do for us to accept it, and then either to conceal from ourselves its true meaning, or shrink from its full force. This is just what, it seems to us, both Hodge and Alford do—unconsciously, I am sure—but still unconsciously they try to soften down the true force of their own rendering.

Of the interpretation under consideration, Hodge says, "The only objection to this is one of a theological kind. It is said to be inconsistent with the Apostle's character to wish that he should be accursed from Christ." He disposes of this objection in this way: "Paul does not say that he did deliberately and actually entertain such a wish; the expression is evidently hypothetical and conditional; 'I could wish, were the thing allowable, possible, or proper.' So far from saying he actually desired to be thus separated from Christ, he impliedly says the very reverse, "I could wish, were it not wrong, or did it not involve my becoming unholy as well as miserable." But as such is the case, the desire

cannot be entertained ! This is the proper force of the imperfect indicative when thus used ; it implies the presence of a condition which is known to be impossible.

"The expression is evidently hypothetical and conditional." True, but in a restricted sense ; it will not admit a certain kind of condition. "It implies the presence of a condition known to be impossible." That is just the kind of condition which it does not imply. "the desire cannot be entertained." When the imperfect is used in this way, the desire is always actually entertained. So we have taken a position the opposite of that of Hodge and Alford, and we must conscientiously hold it until we have a better reason for giving it up than we yet possess. What reason can we give for our opinion ?

The rendering, *I could wish*, is founded on a few passages from the classics and the N.T.—a few passages, still sufficient to justify it grammatically—but at the same time, if these passages were removed from Greek literature, there would be no authority at all for such a quasi-optative rendering of the imperfect indicative. It is therefore plain that we cannot go one inch farther than these passages warrant, and that it must be decided from these, and from these alone, whether the condition present is one known to be impossible, and whether the wish is actually entertained or not.

The first passage which we shall examine is the very one quoted by Hodge in support of his position. It is Acts xxv. 22 : Ἀγρίππας δὲ πρὸς τὸν Φῆστον Ἐβουλόμην καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀκοῦσαι. Ἄρριον φησὶν ἀκούσῃ αὐτοῦ. Now, can any one say that this wish, even though conditional, implies the presence of a condition known to be impossible ? Is it not quite possible in the nature of things for Agrippa to hear the man ; does he not actually entertain the wish to hear him ; and out of mere politeness does he not condition the *pressing* of his actually entertained wish upon the pleasure of Festus, which at the time of speaking is unknown to Agrippa ? Most certainly ; and Festus so understood it, for he answered, "To-morrow thou shalt hear him."

In Gal. iv. 20, Paul says : ἤθελον δὲ παρῆναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἄρτι, κ. τ. λ. There is not a doubt that he actually entertains the wish to be present, and so we have it correctly translated, "I desire to be present with you now."

Let us now take one or two examples from classic Greek. In ARIS. THE FROGS, Dionysius says to Æschylus, Σὺ δὲ δὴ τί βουλευεῖ ποιῆν ; λεγ',



Αἰσχύλε; the latter answers, 'Εβουλόμην μὲν οὐκ ἐρίζειν ἐνθαδε. The wish is certainly entertained here, for the question is asked, "What do you wish to do?" Now if Æschylus only says, "I could wish," implying that he does not entertain the wish now, he evades the question; but that is clearly not the force of the answer; it means, I 'do actually wish not to contend here, but I cannot have my way, or I do not know that I can have my way.'

Æschines, in his oration against Ctesiphon, also makes use of the idiom under consideration. In Sec. 2, Oxford ed. after briefly referring to the preparations which the party of Demosthenes had made to gain their desired object, he declares that his appeal is to the gods, the laws, and the people, as he supposes that no means which could be used, would more avail with the people, than the laws and the principles of justice; he then proceeds, "I could wish (ἐβουλόμην) therefore, that the council of five hundred, and the ecclesiæ, were rightly directed by those placed over them; and that the laws enacted by Solon concerning the orderly behaviour of public speakers, should have full force," &c. That he actually entertains this wish, there can be no doubt; it is just because he really desires such things that he undertakes to speak, but just as Agrippa, after stating his wish, politely deferred to Festus, so here Æschines states what he really wants, and then leaves it with the people. Where then is the impossible condition? In the close of the same oration, after a ridiculous flight, he says, "and now if I have spoken nobly and worthily against this violation of law, I have spoken as I could wish (ἐβουλόμην); but if indifferently, as we were able." It is unnecessary to add that the wish expressed is entertained.

We have examined another passage in Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead, proving the same thing, but we need not quote any more; for the rest we can take Winer's word. He says, "'Εβουλόμην, &c., vellem, without ἂν is to be explained somewhat differently, as Acts xxv. 22. 'I too should have liked,' &c. Aristoph. Ran., 866. Æs. Ctes. 274b. Arrian Epict. 1, 19, 18. Lu. Dial. Mort. 20, 4. abdic. Char. 6, etc. Here is expressed, not a wish previously excited by another circumstance, *volebam*, but a wish still felt by the speaker. This however is not directly stated by him, *volo*, as the gratifying of it does not depend purely on his will." Dr. Alexander is of the same opinion, as the following quotation will show. "The nice distinction in Greek usage as explained by these authorities," (the most exact philologists of modern times) "is that the

present tense would have represented the result as dependent upon the speaker's will, (as in Rom. i. 13, 16, 19, ; 1 Cor. xvi. 7 ; 1 Tim. ii. 8.) The imperfect with the qualifying particle *ἄν* would have meant I could wish (but I do not ; ) whereas this precise form is expressive of an actual and present wish, but subject to the will of others.\*

It may be objected that the condition under some circumstances is impossible, e. g., it may have been impossible for Paul to be present on the occasion to which he refers, and it may have been impossible for Æschines to make his oration what he desired. True, the condition may be impossible, but impossible for what ? for the *gratifying* of the wish not for the *entertaining* of it ; for if the latter were the case, then we could not expect any one to give utterance to the expression at all, without telling a lie, for it does, as we have seen, convey the notion of an actually entertained wish. Both Hodge and Alford here introduce a direct contradiction. The former puts it, "so far from saying he actually desired to be thus separated from Christ, he impliedly says the very reverse." That is, Paul uses the words which, it is everywhere well understood, give expression to an actually entertained wish, the gratifying of which depends upon the will of another ; but since we feel sure that such a wish was contrary to his nature as a Christian, we are to understand that he meant the very reverse of what he actually said.

This will not do ; we must hold that he meant what he said, and if the quasi-operative rendering of the imperfect be adopted, he tells us plainly that he entertains the wish to be separated from Christ, but refrains from directly stating it, because its gratification does not depend upon his own will.

To see the full force of this wish we must look for a moment at the word *ἀνάθεμα*. Its primitive meaning according to Suidas is anything consecrated to God τὸ ἀνατίθεμενον τῷ θεῷ. It next came, according to Hodge, to be applied only to such things as could not be redeemed, and which, when possessed of life, were to be put to death. Then it came to signify a person or thing set apart to destruction on religious grounds. In the New Testament it is plain that the meaning of the word is *accursed*, and those to whom it is applied are represented as under the curse of God. Paul so uses it. In 1 Cor. xvi. 22, he says : "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." In noticing some far-fetched interpretations, Alford in conclusion says of

\* Quoted by Hodge in Com. on Rom.

one in particular: "It is, however, no unfair sample of a multitude of others, all more or less shrinking from the full meaning of the fervid words of the Apostle, 'FROM CHRIST,' *i. e.*, cut off and separated from Him forever, in eternal perdition; no other meaning will satisfy the plain sense of the words." Hodge substantially agrees with Alford, though he does not make use of such strong expressions. According to the quasi-optative rendering then, Paul is made to say, 'I do actually wish to be sent to eternal perdition for my brethren, &c., and would go willingly if outward circumstances or the will of another did not prevent me.'

We cannot see that the above doctrine is not the legitimate result of the I-could-wish rendering; and if it be, then it presents a theological difficulty which we cannot get over.

I know that it is customary to refer us to an expression made use of by Moses, recorded in Ex. xxxii. 32.: "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin:—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," as justifying the words of Paul; but we cannot see how it does, for the two cases appear to us to be very different. To make the case as favourable as possible for our opponents, we will admit that the book here spoken of is the Book of Life in which the names of the elect are written, (though here there is room for an argument; it is quite as likely to be the roll of those whose lives were to be spared on this occasion,) and still there are most striking differences between the case of Moses and that of Paul. Moses does not say that he wishes to be blotted out of the book of life; he does not imply that his being blotted out would save his brethren; for he only asks if they are destroyed, that he shall be destroyed too. His meaning evidently is, that his life is bound up with their lives, and that if God should destroy them, He would not be going any farther, if He destroyed him too. This then, is really a plea, that God would spare both him and them; it certainly does not express a wish to die for them. But Paul actually expresses a wish to be eternally punished for his brethren.

Again, even though we suppose the expression of Moses to be never so strong, it is to be remembered that he is engaged in prayer and under the influence of very strong emotion; and an expression might escape in his earnestness, such as he would not deliberately use. It is true the expression is afterwards recorded, but it is, in the recording, referred to its own proper occasion; and even though it were then discovered to be

a wrong expression, it must not be altered, if a faithful record of what happened is to be given. Even when he knew that he sinned, he must still record his sin, as was the case when he offended God by his impatience. But Paul is not speaking, but writing, and even though in writing under strong emotion, he might make use of an unguarded expression, he could on reading his letter over before sending it, correct whatever was improper, though we can hardly see how he could make any mistake even in the first copy, unless we give up the idea that he was inspired. It is to be noticed that Moses was inspired to give a faithful record of what happened, but not necessarily inspired to offer the prayer; while Paul is inspired to write the very words which some compare to the expression made use of by Moses. But let this be as it may, Paul not only writes, but writes most deliberately: "I say the truth, \* \* \* I lie not," a way of making an assertion emphatic, as Hodge points out, *e. g.*, in Is. xxxviii. 1., it is said: "Thou shalt die and not live," *i. e.* thou shalt most certainly die; John "confessed and denied not," *i. e.*, he confessed most frankly. The remarks of Alford to the effect that Paul here anticipates the insinuations of his enemies is beside the mark. "I say the truth in Christ:"—not only does he make the expression very strong; he makes it equivalent to an oath, for when he says "in Christ," he realizes his union with Christ, and necessarily Christ's presence with him, and it is as though he said, "I speak fully realizing Christ's presence with me," which is equivalent to an oath. This very solemn assertion he makes still stronger by adding, "my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;" and whatever he may mean by it, this we think will hold true, that if after using it, he were to utter what was false, it might be said to him as was said to another, "thou hast not lied unto man but unto God."

Now we may be sure that whatever he says under sanction of these solemn utterances, will be said most seriously and deliberately. None can deny that he does, under sanction of these, say "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." We shall here, for the sake of argument, admit that the force of the *ὅτι* of the second verse extends only over this sentence; can he then, after saying so much in the most deliberate and solemn manner, so far forget himself in the next breath as to make use of an expression which cannot in any way be justified except as the language of uncontrollable emotion? Such a supposition, it appears to us, contradicts the very laws under which the

human mind operates. But this sentence does not convey to his readers the notion which he wishes to convey. It is true that he wants to tell them that he has great sorrow, but that is only a part—they might ask, What is your trouble about?—the complete notion is, that he has great sorrow on account of his brethren; and though one might quibble about the force of the *ὅτι*, it is evident that he completes the expression of the whole truth in his mind at the time, under sanction of the solemn utterances of the first verse.

To sum up, we cannot say confidently that Moses actually expressed a wish to be blotted out of the book of life—indeed we cannot be at all sure that the book of life is referred to—it seems more probable that it was the roll of those who were at this time to escape physical death; there can be no doubt, if the rendering “I could wish” be adopted, that Paul actually entertained the wish to be accursed from Christ. It is certain that Moses speaks under the influence of strong emotion; it is equally certain that Paul writes with the greatest deliberation. It is by no means certain that Moses was inspired to offer the prayer; Paul was most certainly inspired to write the passage under consideration, if inspired at all, and of his inspiration there can be no doubt. We must say then, that we cannot see how the case of Moses in any way helps us over this difficulty.

But allowing Hodge, for argument's sake, to adopt that interpretation which we have already seen is by no means the correct one, we still find that other and insurmountable difficulties meet him at every step. He maintains that Paul in effect says, “I could wish were it not wrong, or did it not involve my being unholy as well as miserable.” This must mean, that if God would accept him as a substitute for his brethren, and punish him for ever as a legally guilty yet personally holy being, he would willingly undergo the punishment. It will not do to plead that Paul here speaks what he would not endorse were he calm and deliberate: this of all ways is the poorest to avoid the difficulty. Besides all the other considerations which we have brought forward to show that he was deliberate, the very words of this paraphrase prove it. He has time to reflect upon the difference between suffering as one sin-polluted, and as one only legally guilty; and can he at the same time reflect upon the awfulness of wishing to be sinful, and forget the awfulness of eternal misery?

Now even this modified doctrine of Hodge is immeasurably too

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strong, Of Christ Himself, it can only be said, that He endured the wrath of God for a time, that "He might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied;" and Christ says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life [mortal life] for his friends;" and Paul himself in this very epistle, and before he comes the length of our text, says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us:" can we then suppose that Paul tells here that he can go beyond what Christ said man could do, and beyond what he himself said man would do, and equal, nay exceed, what Christ has done?

Those who have taken the pains to read so far, will naturally expect us to bring forward another interpretation. We may say that we have no new one to offer, but shall content ourselves with an attempt to justify one which has already been proposed. It is as follows:—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (FOR I MYSELF DID ARDENTLY WISH\* TO BE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST) for my brethren." The English reader may say this is very simple; the difficulties are all avoided, and no great effort or ingenuity seemed to be necessary: why was this interpretation not accepted by Hodge and Alford? For the same reasons that we cannot accept theirs. The rendering just given appears to them to be beset with difficulties both grammatical and theological. Their objections we shall now try in all candour and fairness to meet, and at the same time to notice anything which may seem to point to the above as the correct interpretation.

But first of all, let us say a word or two in justification of the parenthesis, not that the great scholars just named have anything against it, for they do not seem to be aware that such a thing was ever proposed, but because the reader will naturally expect it. It is well known that there is no punctuation in the manuscripts of the Bible, and that what we have is more or less correct, according to the skill and judgment of the critics who have introduced it; if, then, it should become neces-

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\* I did wish, in the sense of *I wished and continued wishing* or *I often wished*. I have translated *ἐνθόρμητον* ardently wished: it is evidently stronger than *βούλομαι*, as we can see by referring to Num. xi. 2, "Moses prayed," (*ἤξαστο*) and Acts xxvi. 29, "I would to God," (*Εὐξαίμην ἂν τῷ Θεῷ*) and *ibid.* xxvii. 29, "wished for the day" (*ἐτύχετο*).

sary, in order to get the true sense of a passage, to alter the punctuation, it is always to be borne in mind that we are not adding to or taking from the Word of God, but only in this, as in many another change which we make, adopting another interpretation instead of the one given: whether or not we are justified in doing so here, will appear as we proceed.

We have ventured to translate the imperfect *ἠχόμην*, "I did ardently wish." To this Alford objects. "The quasi-optative sense of the imperfect in such expressions is the proper and strict one, and no new discovery, but common enough in every schoolboy's reading;" and Hodge says, "He was not expressing what was the state of his mind formerly, but what it was when writing." If we understand these objections aright, they are made for this reason: "The imperfect expresses an action continuing during another action which is past,"\* e. g. in Luke xiv. 7; it is said, He put forth (*ἔλεγεν*) a parable to those which were bidden *when he marked* (*ἔπείχων*) how they chose out (*ἐξελέγοντο*) the chief rooms." We see here how the time of the imperfect in the past is defined by other simultaneous actions.

When it denotes a continuous or statedly repeated action, its time in the past is also oftentimes defined by other actions. Thus, it is said in the narrative of Paul's voyage, "Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and *wished* for the day." Now, *wished* is the imperfect tense, and see how its place in the past is defined by the other events immediately preceding it. "The aorists," on the other hand, "mark actions simply past, without reference to other actions at the same or a different time,"† as, *I wrote the letter*.

If we look at the passage under consideration, we see that Paul simply says, "*I wished or was wishing to be accursed from Christ*," but the place of this tense in past time is not defined by any other tense in past time; hence Hodge says, "Had Paul intended to express this idea, he would have used the aorist, the common tense of narration, not the imperfect." We now see the full force of the grammatical difficulty: is it an insurmountable or even a formidable one? If we cannot find Greek usage to justify it, we must, in the exercise of good sense, yield, and confess that we are beaten, at least in so far as the finding of a rational

\* Arnold, G. P. Comp.; Winer G. N. T. Dict., 6 ed., part III., sec. xl., 3 a.

† Arnold, G. P. Comp.

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explanation of the passage is concerned. We shall make the attempt to prove our position good.

"In the historical style, the imperfect is sometimes in appearance used for the aorist, when events are described at which the narrator was present. The narration thus becomes more graphic and animated than if the facts had been expressed by the aorist, which simply relates, condensing them into one point of time."\* We need not ask for higher authority than Winer, yet we have it, for he gives *examples*: ἐθεώρουν τὸν σατανᾶν ὡς ἀστραπὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven."† Here, doubtless, an imperfect is used without any other event to define its time in the past.

Again, "The imperfect denotes a continuous or statedly repeated action in past time."‡ For this purpose it may be used without any accompanying expression of definite time or circumstance; *e.g.* "Without a parable *spoke* he not unto them,"§—the time during His ministry being understood or inferred. We shall just quote one other passage on this point, though we might bring forward a great number, and on it alone we are willing to risk our position in this matter. It is found in Luke vi., 23, "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did (ἐποιούν) their fathers unto the prophets." The imperfect here tells simply what their fathers were *accustomed to do*, without reference to time or circumstance, the fact being that they did it at all times and under all circumstances. Now Paul wishes to tell us what his habit or custom was in the past in a particular matter, and shall we say to him, If so, you must give us the imperfect, with a specified time or circumstance, or, if not, use the aorist? But Paul might reply: 'If I were to use the aorist you would rightly understand me to speak of an act that was momentary; but I wish to tell you that which I continued doing for some time—to tell you what was habitual, and the imperfect tense is the proper one for that purpose, and the fact that time or circumstances are not specified is no objection.

We are open to correction here, as in all other parts of this discourse; and while we would speak with due caution, we must say that in the present state of our knowledge, that it seems to us that this effectually disposes of the grammatical difficulty.

\* Winer, G.N.T.D., 6 ed., Sec. XL., 3, d.

† Luke x., 18.

§ Matt. xiii., 34.

‡ Winer, Sec. XL., 3, b.

We now address ourselves to the theological difficulties. Admitting that *I did wish* is grammatically correct, it must refer to the days of his Pharisaism ; how then could one who never was a Christian wish himself accursed from Christ ? Or to put it somewhat differently, in the words of Hodge, " No Jew would express his hatred of Christ, and his indifference to the favours which he offered, by saying he wished himself accursed of Christ. Paul never so wished himself before his conversion, for this supposes that he recognised the power of Christ to inflict on him the imprecated curse, and that his displeasure was regarded as a great evil."

We must first ascertain the meaning of the word *ἀνάθεμα*. The discussion on this word has been very able, learned, long, and tedious, and one need not go farther than Tholuck and his references to find it cut. This discussion, we think, has arisen not because of any difficulty in the way of ascertaining what Paul means by the word ; but because it was desirable to find some modified meaning which would fall in with certain interpretations of our text which have been proposed. Paul says, " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha—Anathema, *i.e.*, cut off or excluded from the Christian Church by the Church, and in accordance with the well known principle recorded in Matt. xviii., 18, cut off or shut out by Christ himself ; an alien from the Christian society, a stranger from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, being condemned already and under the wrath of God." He uses it twice in the Epistle to the Galatians in the same sense, and this is the sense which it bears in the text under consideration, though at the time he actually wished to be accursed, he was not aware that it involved such consequences.

Next, why does he say accursed *from* Christ ? If accursed by the Christian society, and through it by Christ, who was really the source of the curse, why does he not say *by* Christ ? This is a difficulty which all parties must meet in some way. The following is our explanation : There are two ideas in the Apostle's mind represented by the one word, *Anathema*. First, there is the thing accursed ; that such is at least one meaning of the word is plain from its derivation and from its use in the Sept., for חֵרֶם (*harem*) which often means an accursed thing ; it also has this meaning in the New Testament. Again, it signifies the curse which makes a thing accursed : " We have cursed (*ἀναθεματίσαμεν*) ourselves with a curse (*ἀναθέματι*)."\* Now if we make use of a construction

\* Acts xxiii. 14.

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which will fully express the thoughts in the mind of Paul, we will have "I did ardently wish to be accursed by a curse from (*ἀπό*) Christ."

Does this imply, as Hodge thinks, that he recognised in Christ the power to inflict the curse? Quite the contrary, we think; for he just wished because he did not believe that Christ had the power, and because he desired to make it manifest to all that he regarded his claim to be God as blasphemy. He believed that Christ was an enemy of the true God whom he supposed he was serving, and because an enemy of his God, he ardently desired that Christ should be his enemy, and as we have no doubt that Christians had proclaimed the consequences of opposition to Christ, perhaps in the very words in which Paul himself afterwards declared them, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema," Paul just replied, "I greatly desire to be known as one who does not love him; I ardently wish to be under his curse, for woe unto him of whom the enemies of God speak well, and blessed is he who is cursed by them." This is one of the most emphatic ways in which one can show his contempt for imposture and his opposition to it; *e.g.*, I may say I welcome the curse of the Pope; I would rather be under it than not; I greatly desire that he should think me his enemy, and find me an enemy powerful enough to call forth the highest mark of his displeasure, and thus I express my utter contempt for and hatred of his system, and my determined opposition to it, in the strongest language possible; but this is the very opposite of recognizing in the Pope power to inflict on me any punishment whatever.

Before we proceed to the next theological difficulty in our way, we may remark that if what Tholuck and Hodge say be true, that there is such an impossible condition attached to the wish that it is not perfectly wished, as the former says, and not really wished at all, but the reverse implied, as the latter teaches, how is it that Paul leaves the word generally used in those sentences in which a wish is conditioned upon outward circumstances or the unknown will of another, *viz.*, *ἐβουλόμην* (which means simply to wish, and strong enough, one would think, for the purpose), and makes use of another, *ἠύχόμην*, which is much stronger, meaning to desire ardently, or to pray for? What is the use of expressing the wish so strongly, when he does not mean to wish at all? The latter word, however, is very appropriate, if the interpretation which we have just given be adopted.

"It was no proof of his love for his brethren that he once felt as they



then did, but the highest imaginable if the ordinary interpretation be adopted."

If we take the true meaning of the ordinary interpretation, we should think it was the highest imaginable proof of love for his brethren; but taking Hodge's interpretation of the ordinary rendering, we cannot see how it is any proof of love at all; it is a mere joke—an absurdity. He quotes Tholuck to this effect to prove his position, though the words are not exactly the same as in the translation of which we have made use. "The indicative of the imperfect expresses exactly the impossibility of that for which one wishes, on which account it is not, properly speaking, really wished at all." From this it will be seen that the thought is self-contradictory, for it contains two elements which destroy each other. If any created mind could give birth to such a thought, I should be disposed to call it a suicide, as it destroys itself with its own hand as soon as it is born. Therefore when Paul said, "I could wish," &c., according to Hodge, he did not wish anything at all, and how could it be any proof of love to his brethren? He does not even express anything at all. Let none be deceived by the use of the word *could*. In English it means, among other things, I have power to do so and so, but it cannot be used in this sense as a translation of the Greek imperfect, for as the wish is one actually entertained, the *could* is merely deferential, *i.e.*, merely used for the sake of politeness, and as the mind also contains a condition which makes the entertaining of the wish impossible, the thought, poor thing, is at once destroyed.

But we have no difficulty here, inasmuch as we contend that Paul does not make the statement as a proof of his love, but as a reason for his sorrow. 'I have sorrow for them, and I can feel for them, for I once occupied the same position.' His sorrow is the proof of his love.

Hodge makes the following remark in reference to the ordinary interpretation which he adopts: "That it suits the force and meaning of the words, and is agreeable to the context, must, on all hands be admitted." We here intend again to take the offensive, and to show that the ordinary interpretation does not suit the force and meaning of the words, even when grammatically considered; while the interpretation which we have given exactly suits them. The ordinary rendering, "I could wish that *myself* were accursed," &c., gives αὐτὸς ἐγὼ the force which it would have were it the accusative before the infinitive εἶναι, which it is not, instead of making it the nominative to ἠχόμην, which it really is, the

correct rendering is, "I myself did ardently wish." Having restored these words to their proper place, we next enquire what the true force of αὐτός is.

Alford says, "It gives emphasis as ἐγὼ Παῦλος Gal. v. 2: "I, the very person who write this, and whom ye know!" With due deference to this great scholar, it will appear plain to any who will take the trouble to examine the passages, that the two cases are not at all parallel. In Gal., Paul has been proving that he was called of Christ, and appointed a teacher of things directly received from God, and after having established his claim to such authority, it is quite to the point to say, *I Paul* tell you so and so; thus it is equal to the heading of a proclamation; the parallel to the passage in Gal. is therefore to be found in such a passage as this: "I, even I, Artaxerxes the King." But who will say that the formal heading of a proclamation, calling attention to the person who makes it as a man of authority, is the same with, I myself, the very person whom you know, and not some one else of the same name, whom you do not know. In our text, no one has been denying Paul's apostolic authority; just imagine then, his writing about half of a long epistle, and having something very important to say, introduces it with the words: 'I say the truth in Christ, &c., for I, the very person who write this epistle, and whom you know, could wish,' &c. We cannot possibly accept this as the force of αὐτός.

It is evident that Paul is here speaking of himself in connection with some other person; hence, he uses the emphatic first person, just as Agrippa did when he said, ἐβουλόμην καὶ αὐτὸς—"I myself could wish to hear the man," *i.e.*, I myself or *I too* as well as others who had heard him, or still wished to hear him. So Paul says, "I myself did ardently wish as some are now doing." We are inclined to think this is the just force of αὐτός in the passage, and in fact in no other way, it seems to us, can it be explained; hence, it falls in most naturally with our interpretation, while it is a great difficulty in the way of the ordinary one.

In reference to the harmony of these two interpretations with the context, we have to say, first, that the ordinary interpretation is not so agreeable to the context as Hodge seems to think; while the one which we have endeavoured to justify is in perfect harmony with it. First, the interpretation, "I did wish," is in perfect harmony with the context. We have already said that the parenthesis is introduced as a reason for his sorrow, and does not this appear far more

natural here than a strong expression in proof of that sorrow, when we consider the object which he had in view in making the statements at the head of the chapter, and also the manner in which he makes them? He had just been speaking of the blessedness of union with Christ, and he was about to speak of God's sovereign decree in electing some to this blessedness and rejecting others; and lest it might be said by his own people that he was, like all apostates, a deadly hater of those whom he had deserted, and hence strove to make it appear that those to whom he had gone were the people favoured of heaven, while he taught such awful doctrines concerning those whom he had left, he says in the most solemn manner, 'It is not so, for I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, for I know well what their position is, having once occupied it myself; I once, like them, set Christ at nought, and defied Him; I know what my zeal was, how blind I was, how firmly persuaded I was that I was doing God service, and besides all this, I know it is of God's grace that I am now in possession of the light of life; therefore I do well to weep for them.' We cannot but think that this is "a sense pertinent to the apostle's object."

In the second place, the ordinary interpretation is not so agreeable to the context as one could wish. The solemn assurances which Paul gives at the opening of the chapter, that he speaks the truth, forbid the use of any such strong, not to say rash, expression as that which this interpretation ascribes to him. Further, there is no use for such an expression. No expression, however strong, can give greater assurance of the fact that the truth is spoken than the statements of the first verse; If the statement is still discredited, no amount of words can gain credence for it. If, on the other hand, it is believed, how strange it would be for those believing it to require additional confirmation of its truth of the nature of that supposed by some to be given in the third verse. But one may object: Why does he, according to your interpretation, give any additional confirmation of the fact that he is sorrowful? That is not what he does according to our interpretation. He gives the reason why he is sorrowful, and in so doing says that which is perfectly natural, for one may say, I firmly believe that you are sorrowful on our account, and pertinently asks, Why are you sorrowful? but he could not ask, after saying that he firmly believed the statement, for additional confirmation of its truth.

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**Scriptural Form of Church Government**

—BY THE—

**REV. C. C. STEWART, M.A.**

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

**OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

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